



Water Resources Division's Aquatic Invasive Species of the Week!

FOR THE WEEK OF:

July 22-28, 2013

Nutria

Myocastor coypus

Origin: South America

Also known as: Coypus, swamp rat

Current Distribution: Established populations along the Gulf of Mexico, Atlantic coast, Pacific Northwest. Pocket occurrences in Ohio. NOT IN MICHIGAN.

Means of Introduction: Brought to the US in 1889 for fur, populations were eventually released or escaped. Currently on Michigan's Prohibited Species list.

Description: Often mistaken for a beaver or muskrat. However, Nutria have large yellow to orange incisors, a thick rat-like tail that is covered in bristly hairs, and noticeably white whiskers. Their bodies are 2 feet long with a large head and short legs.

Habitat: Semi-aquatic. Usually found near a waterbodies.

Impacts: Damages important native vegetation and destroys habitat in wetlands.

Interesting Note: Nutria are such a huge problem in Louisiana that efforts for control have expanded to creating a market for human consumption. Nutria meat is healthy in that it's high in protein and low in fat- many tasty recipes have come out of the Bayou State!

For more information on Nutria, please
visit USDA's website at:
www.aphis.usda.gov



Photo: Jose Reynaldo da Fonseca



Photo: USGS



Nutria damage to a marsh. Photo by USDA.